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Letter dated 21 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of the document entitled "Strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa in the maintenance of peace and security" which will serve as a background note for the public meeting of the Security Council on 22 October 2002 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this text circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Martin **Belinga-Eboutou**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 21 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Background note from the President

Public meeting of the Security Council on the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa in the maintenance of peace and security

The problem

Despite enormous potential and vast mineral, water and agricultural resources, Central Africa in the broad sense (Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe) has been slow in embarking on its economic and social development, and projects to the world the least positive image of all the subregions of Africa.

A region that for at least two decades has been racked by civil wars and wars between States, Central Africa has the sorry record of seven of its 11 countries being racked by particularly devastating and ruinous conflicts.

Five peacekeeping, peace-building or peacemaking missions out of the 12 missions under way on the continent are established in or working for the subregion.[1] This is evidence of chronic instability, both socio-politically and in security terms. Moreover, of the score or so of special representatives and envoys and personal representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General in Africa, six are in Central Africa.

This discouraging picture confirms the urgency of the States of the region and the international community focusing on the evils afflicting this key region of Africa.

Indeed, considerable efforts have to date been made by the States of the region, both on their own initiative and with the support of the international community.

Regional cooperation is based on a tripod comprising:

The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), comprising Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo;

The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), comprising Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda;

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), comprising Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo,

[1] The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the United Nations Office in Angola (UNOA), the United Nations Office in Burundi (UNOB), the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe. ECCAS is recognized by the African Union as one of the five regional economic communities and enjoys observer status with the United Nations.

The least that can be said is that these subregional structures have not permitted real physical, economic and political integration, inter alia because of the persistence of conflicts, the inadequacy of the institutional and human capacity (particularly directed towards the process of integration) and the slowness in implementing the political commitments on the subject entered into at the highest level.

For the past few years increasing collective awareness among the States of the subregion has been apparent, and this has permitted a revival of the activities of ECCAS, which was virtually inactive from 1992 to 1998. This process of revival benefited from the contribution of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to redefining the functions of ECCAS, which in this context has undertaken a real qualitative change in its activities with the incorporation of a collective security component and the establishment of a post of Deputy Secretary responsible for this subject. The strengthening of collective awareness has also benefited the work of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Since then, important decisions on collective security have been taken in this area. These include inter alia the conclusion of the Protocol establishing the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), comprising a Non-Aggression Pact and a Mutual Assistance Pact.

COPAX, whose objective, in partnership with the United Nations, is to prevent, manage and settle conflicts in Central Africa, is based on the following organs:

The Central African Early Warning System;

The Defence and Security Commission;

The Central African Multinational Force.

The region appears to be gradually emerging from the conflicts that have been affecting it for more than 20 years, and this poses the immediate problem of building peace, with a requirement for the mobilization of major resources to support the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration operations.

Objectives

The public meeting of the Security Council on 22 October on cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa in the area of conflict prevention and the maintenance of peace and security is aimed inter alia at:

Promoting and strengthening the partnership between the United Nations system and Central Africa in relation to the maintenance of peace and security, in order to raise it at least to the level of what is being done between the United Nations and other regions of Africa and the world;

Strengthening capacities in the subregion, inter alia in the area of conflict prevention and the maintenance of peace and security, as well as economic integration;

Improving the effectiveness, coordination and cohesion of the subregional organizations in Central Africa;

Mobilizing the resources required to build peace in the subregion.

Expected results

A presidential statement in which the Council would request the Secretary-General to report to it on the situation in Central Africa, with his recommendations, taking into account the views and expectations expressed during the discussions by States and by other international institutions;

Success in giving Central Africa the capacity conducive to its taking over the task of conflict management and resolution and enabling it to play a pivotal role in African integration commensurate with its potential and its geostrategic location.